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WINTER IS HERE

Metro fills you in on everything you need to know ahead of the final season of the HBO hit "Game of Thrones." 7, 9-11

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4 THINGS TO KNOW

Israeli spacecraft crashes in attempt to reach moon

The mishap occurred in front of an audience that included PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

A girl poses for a photo next to a poster of the SpaceIL spacecraft in Netanya. An Israeli spacecraft has failed in its attempt to make history as the first privately funded lunar mission. The SpaceIL spacecraft lost contact with Earth late Thursday, just moments before it was to land on the moon, and scientists declared the mission a failure. AP PHOTO/ARIEL SCHALIT

An Israeli spacecraft lost contact with Earth and crashed just moments before it was to land on the moon late Thursday, failing in an ambitious attempt to make history as the first privately funded lunar mission.

The Beresheet spacecraft lost communication with ground control as it was making its final descent. Moments later, the mission was declared a failure.

"We definitely crashed on the surface of the moon," said Opher Doron, general manager of the space division of Israel Aerospace Industries. He said the spacecraft was in pieces scattered at the planned landing site.

Doron said the spacecraft's engine turned off shortly before landing, and scientists were still trying to figure out the cause of the failure.

"One of the inertial measurement units failed. And that caused an unfortunate chain of events we're not sure about," he said. "The engine was stopped and the spacecraft crashed. That's all we know."

Doron nonetheless called the mission an "amazing success," for reaching the moon and coming so close to landing successfully. "It is by far the smallest, cheapest spacecraft ever to get to the moon," he said.

"We definitely crashed on the surface of the moon."

Opher Doron, general manager of the space division of Israel Aerospace Industries

The mishap occurred in front of a packed audience that included Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was broadcast live on national television.

It had been hoped that the small robotic spacecraft, built by the nonprofit SpaceIL and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries, would match a feat that has been achieved only by the national space agencies of three countries: U.S., Russia and China.

"We will try again," Netanyahu said. "We reached the moon, but we want to land more comfortably, and that is for the next time."

Around 20 minutes before the scheduled landing, engine firings slowed Beresheet's descent. Suspense gripped the control room.

Engineers watched in silence as Beresheet, its movements streamed live on dozens of screens, glided toward a free-fall.

But then the screens showed the engine misfiring, and the velocity surging as it headed toward the lunar surface. Radio signals from the spacecraft, the size of a washing machine, abruptly cut off, and nervous chatter erupted in the control room.

Standing before darkened computer screens, commanders declared the mission a failure. The craft crashed near the historic Apollo landing sites.

President Reuven Rivlin hosted dozens of youngsters at his official residence, one of several celebrations scheduled across the country. The children, some wearing white-and-blue spacesuits, appeared confused as the crash unfolded.

"We are full of admiration for the wonderful people who brought the spacecraft to the moon," Rivlin said. "True, not as we had hoped, but we will succeed in the end."

The failure was a disappointing ending to a 4-million-mile lunar voyage, almost unprecedented in length, that was designed to conserve fuel and reduce price.

The spacecraft hitched a ride on a SpaceX Falcon rocket launched from Florida in February.

For the past two months, Beresheet, which means "Genesis" or "In the Beginning," traveled around the Earth several times before entering lunar orbit.

Beresheet carried a small laser retroreflector from NASA intended to measure magnetic fields and provide insight on the moon's iron core. It also had a time capsule that included a Bible, Israeli cultural symbols and a picture of famed Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, who died in the crash of the U.S. space shuttle Columbia in 2003.

NASA broadcast the landing attempt live on its dedicated TV channels as well as online. ASSOCIATED PRESS

2 Bridge scandal defendant begins federal prison term

An appointee of former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has reported to prison for his role in the George Washington Bridge lane-closing scandal. Bill Baroni started serving his 18-month sentence Tuesday in the Loretto Federal Correctional Institution in Pennsylvania. Baroni was an executive of the authority that operates the bridge. He was convicted in 2016 and sentenced to 24 months in what prosecutors said was a plot to create traffic jams to retaliate against a mayor who wouldn't endorse Christie. In November, a federal appeals court threw out civil rights counts against Baroni and co-defendant Bridget Kelly and ordered they be resentenced. Kelly, Christie's former deputy chief of staff, is scheduled to be resentenced April 24. The former Republican governor wasn't charged, but the scandal derailed his presidential ambitions. ASSOCIATED PRESS

3 Obama letter praises Hussle at packed memorial

Former President Barack Obama praised the legacy of slain rapper Nipsey Hussle on Thursday in a letter read during a public memorial attended by thousands of fans, many of them dressed in white. Obama's letter to the family was read by Karen Civil, Hussle's friend and business partner. The former president praised Hussle's attempts to revitalize the gang-plagued neighborhood where he was raised, and where he was gunned down last month. "While most folks look at the Crenshaw neighborhood where he grew up and see only gangs, bullets and despair, Nipsey saw potential. He saw hope," Obama's letter said. "To build a skills-training center and a co-working space in Crenshaw; to lift up the Eritrean-American community; to set an example for young people to follow — is a legacy worthy of celebration," he added. REUTERS

4 Authorities say deputy's son behind church fires

The suspect in a string of fires that destroyed three black churches in rural Louisiana is the white son of a sheriff's deputy whose father helped arrange for his arrest, authorities said Thursday. Holden Matthews, 21, faces arson charges in the connection with the blazes in and around Opelousas, a city of 16,000 where the flame-gutted remains of the buildings evoked memories of civil rights era violence. Louisiana Fire Marshall Butch Browning offered no motive for the fires. He and other officials stopped short of calling them hate crimes. Eric Rommal, the agent in charge of the New Orleans FBI office, said investigators were still looking into whether the fires were "bias motivated." Browning said there were no indications that anyone else was involved and the danger to churches was over. "This community is safe again," he said at a news conference. ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Often we shy away from asking the uncomfortable questions that we all wonder about from time to time. Questions and curiosities that can keep our minds preoccupied and distracted, or even affect our health by avoiding these topics completely. I understand this common fear and worry that many of us share which is why my approach in patient care is always an authentic and individualized experience, treating the patient first as a translator of sorts, helping me investigate the actual symptoms of their concerns.

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Dr. Tamara Guichard has been seen recently on Bustle for sharing her expert knowledge on ways to make OBGYN appointments less nerve-racking!

Assange busted in London, now faces US extradition

The WikiLeaks founder was taken from Ecuador's embassy.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is seen in a police van after he was arrested by British police outside the Ecuadorian embassy in London on Thursday. REUTERS

British police dragged WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange out of Ecuador's embassy on Thursday after his seven-year asylum was revoked, paving the way for his extradition to the United States for one of the biggest-ever leaks of classified information.

Hours after the frail-looking Assange, with white hair and a long beard, was carried head-first by at least seven men out of the London embassy and into a waiting police van, U.S. officials announced he had been charged with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

As he was being hauled out of the embassy in a dramatic scene, the Australian-born Assange was heard shouting, "This is unlawful, I'm not leaving."

British Prime Minister Theresa May hailed the news in parliament, to cheers and cries of "Hear, hear!" from lawmakers.

But in Washington, President Donald Trump, who in 2016 said "I love WikiLeaks" after it released emails that U.S. authorities have said were hacked by Russia to harm his election opponent Hillary Clinton, told reporters he had no opinion on the charges against Assange.

"I know nothing about WikiLeaks. It's not my thing," Trump said.

Assange gave a thumbs-up in handcuffs as he was taken from a police station to a London court, where he pronounced himself not guilty of failing to surrender in 2012. District Judge Michael Snow called Assange a "narcissist" and convicted him of skipping bail. Sentencing will be at a later date.

Police said they arrested Assange, 47, after being invited into the embassy following the Ecuadorean government's withdrawal of asylum. Assange was carried out of the building carrying a copy of Gore Vidal's "History of the National Security State," which he continued reading in court.

In Washington, the U.S. Justice Department said Assange was charged with conspiring with former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to gain access to a government computer as part of a 2010 leak by WikiLeaks of hundreds of thousands of U.S. military reports about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and American diplomatic communications.

The indictment was made secretly last year and unsealed on Thursday. He faces up to five years in prison if convicted, with legal experts saying more charges were possible.

Ecuador suspended Assange's citizenship and accused him and others at WikiLeaks of collaborating in attempts to destabilize the Andean nation's government, after years of offering him shelter.

Lawyers for Assange said he may risk torture and his life would be in danger if he were to be extradited to the U.S.

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Lawyer: Challenge to NYC's vaccination order in the works

New York City's effort to halt a measles outbreak by ordering mandatory vaccinations in one Brooklyn neighborhood is facing opposition, with lawyers for parents opposed to vaccinations promising to file a lawsuit challenging the order by Friday.

But city health officials say they have struck the right balance with the unusual order, and they hope a mixture of outreach and prodding will overcome resistance to vaccines in a slice of the predominantly Orthodox Jewish community hardest hit by the disease.

"The measles vaccine is highly effective," said Dr. Herminia Palacio, the city's deputy mayor for health and human services. "Measles is highly contagious. That combination means this is the right time for this measure."

$1K

The vaccine order affects four ZIP codes in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn and threatens possible fines of up to $1,000 for noncompliance.

Palacio spoke a day after she joined Mayor Bill de Blasio and other officials in announcing the vaccine order affecting four ZIP codes in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn and threatening possible fines of up to $1,000 for noncompliance.

Civil rights attorney Michael Sussman called the order "an overreach of authority" and said a lawsuit challenging it will be filed this week.

Some 285 measles cases have been identified in New York City since last fall, compared with two in all of 2017.

De Blasio said Tuesday that he was confident New York City's vaccination order would survive any legal challenge.

"This is a public health emergency," the Democratic mayor said. "And the reason the city government is empowered in a public health emergency is to save lives."

Authorities will carry out the order by interviewing Williamsburg residents who have been diagnosed with measles and then interviewing everyone who those people have come in contact with.

"These are skills that we practice every day," Palacio said. "It's not just that they know what questions to ask. They actually do know how to work with people. They have experience gaining people's trust."

The health officials will try to persuade any unvaccinated person who has been exposed to measles to get the vaccine. People who refuse the vaccine or who refuse to get their children vaccinated could be fined, though de Blasio said he hoped to avoid levying any fines.

"Our goal is not to fine anyone," de Blasio said. "Our goal is to get people vaccinated. But we're also trying to help everyone understand there is urgency here."

The city believes an estimated 1,800 children in Williamsburg were not immunized as of December.

Health officials are taking additional steps to control the outbreak in advance of Passover, when some families may travel overseas to areas in Israel or Europe that are experiencing measles outbreaks. ASSOCIATED PRESS

People walk through an Orthodox Jewish community in Williamsburg. GETTY IMAGES

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Michael Avenatti charged with embezzlement, fraud, cheating on taxes

Attorney could face a sentence of 335 years in prison if convicted on all charges.

Michael Avenatti. AP PHOTO

Attorney Michael Avenatti has been charged in a 36-count federal indictment alleging he stole millions of dollars from clients, did not pay his taxes, committed bank fraud and lied in bankruptcy proceedings, federal prosecutors in California said Thursday.

Avenatti, 48, was indicted late Wednesday by a Southern California grand jury on a raft of additional charges following his arrest last month in New York on two related counts and for allegedly trying to shake down Nike for up to $25 million.

"These four areas of criminal conduct alleged in the indictment are all linked to one another because money generated from one set of crimes appears in other sets — typically in the form of payments to lull victims and to prevent Mr. Avenatti's financial house of cards from collapsing," U.S. Attorney Nick Hanna told reporters.

A jet co-owned by Avenatti was seized Wednesday as part of the ongoing investigation, officials said.

The attorney best known for representing porn actress Stormy Daniels in lawsuits against President Donald Trump said Thursday on Twitter that he will plead not guilty to the California charges, which carry a potential prison sentence of 335 years in prison.

"I look forward to the entire truth being known as opposed to a one-sided version meant to sideline me," he wrote.

The new charges do not include the New York extortion case alleging Avenatti demanded millions to stay quiet about claims he planned to reveal about Nike paying high school players. Avenatti has said he expects to be cleared in that case.

The 61-page Southern California indictment alleges Avenatti embezzled from a paraplegic man and four other clients and deceived them by shuffling money between accounts to pay off small portions of what they were due to lull them into thinking they were getting paid.

Avenatti is also charged with not paying personal income taxes, not paying taxes for his various businesses, including two law firms, and pocketing payroll taxes from the Tully's Coffee chain that he owned, the indictment said.

Between September 2015 and January 2018, Global Baristas US, the company that operated Tully's, failed to pay the IRS $3.2 million in payroll taxes, including nearly $2.4 million withheld from employees, the indictment said.

When the IRS put tax levies on coffee company bank accounts to collect more than $5 million, Avenatti had Tully's employees deposit cash receipts in a little-known account, the indictment said.

Avenatti, 48, was also charged with submitting fraudulent tax returns to get more than $4 million in loans from The Peoples Bank in Biloxi, Mississippi, in 2014. The tax returns he presented to the bank were never filed to the IRS, prosecutors have said.

The charges are the latest major blow to a career that took off last year when Avenatti represented Daniels in her lawsuit to break a confidentiality agreement with Trump to stay mum about an affair they allegedly had. ASSOCIATED PRESS

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For the ultimate 'Game of Thrones' fan: How to speak Valyrian

REUTERS

American linguist David J. Peterson may have built up the unique and ancient languages for the television series "Game of Thrones" but when it comes to who speaks Valyrian best, there's no contest.

"The best is Jacob Anderson," Peterson told Reuters. "He plays Gray Worm on 'Game of Thrones' and he's so good, he's so good. He is head and shoulders better than me.

"When I heard him the first time speak the Valyrian language, I just said, 'wow.' I went back and rewatched it," he said.

Peterson, a co-founder of the Language Creation Society, started off by building on a few key words and phrases created by George R. R. Martin in his "A Song of Ice and Fire" novels that form the basis of the HBO hit medieval fantasy series about warring families.

"I didn't reference any other languages. After I included all of [Martin's] material I built it up in a way that I thought book readers and George R. R. Martin himself would expect and appreciate."

When Peterson got the scripts for the TV show, producers tagged all the lines he had to translate into Valyrian or Dothraki.

He then broke up the language syllable by syllable for the actors, and recorded it for them.

"I record really slow so they can hear exactly how it's pronounced, and then I record the English for reference," Peterson said.

Although the final season of "Game of Thrones" starts on Sunday, the languages will go on living.

Peterson has developed a course on the Duolingo foreign language app where fans can learn to speak Valyrian for free. According to the Duolingo app, there are currently over 800,000 active Valyrian learners — more than those learning Norwegian or Hindi.

"I also do all the recordings so that's my voice that you're hearing when you use the app. And I also take it myself because it's nice to brush up," Peterson said. REUTERS

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READER WRITE-INS:

PARKING AT A PREMIUM

While coming down my Mom's block I saw a space in front of her house.

Since several cars have been hit recently I pulled over to let a car approaching from the opposite direction pass.

They proceeded to pull into my Mom's driveway to make a U-turn.

When I realized they were trying to get my coveted space, I pulled around before they could back up and took my space.

They then pulled up next to me. I started to ignore since I don't want trouble, but they sat there so I rolled down my window.

Driver then said to me, "That's what I get from being patient". I was like, WHAT???

Then my response was, Do you even live in this neighborhood???? This is my house, where I live.

Now waste more gas driving around looking for another available space, because this space was not.

By Sheryl L.J., Metro NY Reader

ISTOCK

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Changes at home will be difficult if you let too many people get involved in what's going on. A secretive but focused approach to a move or personal change is favored.

Taurus Live and learn. What you learn through conversation or from travel will leave you open to suggestions and willing to make a change that will encourage new opportunities.

Gemini You don't have to take on other people's responsibilities. Don't leave yourself open to being taken for granted. Make it clear what you think and what you are willing to do.

Cancer Spend more time on your own projects and strive to enhance your life. A reliable partnership will support the change you want to see happen.

Leo Don't set yourself up for disappointment. Walk away from anyone trying to coerce you into something you shouldn't do. Put your energy into personal gains, not into helping others get ahead.

Virgo If you participate in events that have a purpose or meaning for you, you will meet someone who will have an impact on the way you think and which changes you want to make.

Libra Be careful what you sign up for. Find out exactly what's entailed before you get involved in someone else's plans. Personal physical improvements and prioritizing a romantic relationship are encouraged.

Scorpio Socialize more. Reach out to people who enrich your life. Take the road less traveled and explore what's available. Spiritual and emotional encounters will lead to new beginnings.

Sagittarius Positive change will happen if you focus more on your needs and less on the demands that others are putting on you. An emotional and physical adjustment will do you good.

Capricorn If you get together with someone from your past, you will be offered information that will help you make positive changes. Starting something new will be rejuvenating.

Aquarius Tidy up any unfinished business so that you can move on to new and exciting pastimes. Adjustments to your personal space will encourage self-improvement and a healthier lifestyle.

Pisces Set yourself up for stardom. Step into the spotlight and share your thoughts. Good things will happen if you follow your heart and put your energy into something that counts. EUGENIA LAST

Emilia Clarke as Daenerys Targaryen with Kit Harington as Jon Snow in Game of Thrones Season 8. | HBO

$15m
is the budget for each episode in season 8, according to reports.

Why is 'GoT' so successful & addictive?

Metro investigates the phenomenon.

DMITRY BELYAEV MWN

Jon Snow (Kit Harington) meets a Dragon. | HBO

What started as a niche epic fantasy book series by novelist and short story writer George R. R. Martin has now become a global cultural phenomenon thanks to HBO's "Game of Thrones" series. According to statistics, season seven's finale was viewed by more than 16.5 million people around the world, and that number is expected to grow for the last six episodes scheduled to premiere April 14.

"GoT" became such phenomenon because it broke the mold for what can successfully be done on television. Even more than other shows focused on antiheroes, it created morally ambiguous, flawed, and complicated characters the likes of which we had not seen before. Experts confirmed that thanks to its medieval fantasy setting and shocking sex and brutal violence scenes, "Game of Thrones" became a perfect, escapist antidote of too much modern world filled with political correctness and sensitivity.

"I think we're living in a time where more and more people are getting tired of being lectured about how sensitive we need to be and how we need to watch every other word that comes out of our mouths because someone might be 'triggered,' traumatized or feel oppressed. In 'Game of Thrones' we can see a large cast of characters that can all be equally brutal, duplicitous and amoral and we can get a cathartic thrill out of their bad behavior. Because in the 'GoT' world of dragons and monsters they are far enough removed from our reality," Barna Donovan, professor of film and media studies at St. Peter's University, explained to Metro.

So, the HBO creation combines fantasy, familiar elements of political intrigue and realistic human conflict. On the one hand, the story has rich, colorful, large-scale world building. It transports viewers to a far away, exotic, adventure-filled alternate universe.

"But, on the other hand, the stories are much more realistic and relatable to our real world than the fantasies we have seen in various J.R.R. Tolkien adaptations. "Game of Thrones" is not another simple quest fantasy about finding treasures or dealing with magical rings and fighting monsters. This show deals with conflicts between nations, social classes, races, as well as drama of people scheming and maneuvering for political power. "Game of Thrones" is both exotic and otherworldly, while at the same time very familiar and relevant to our own world's conflicts and problems," Donovan added.

Apart from providing a perfect way to escape reality and many other factors that make the series so successful, it is a plot heavy adventure show. Thus, the wish to find out "what happens" drives the desire to view.

"Also, the expense of its production makes it very lavish and visually impressive. Its story isn't tied to a particular region of the world which makes it more widely accessible," Amanda D. Lotz, professor of digital media and communication at Queensland University of Technology, stated. "Its violence may detract some, but it otherwise offers dastardly villains, compelling heroes, and many different characters for audiences to root for."

> *"Part of GoT's success is derived from the comfort offered by a retro-fantasy entertainment offered to a rapidly changing world."*
>
> Phillip Freeman, MD, psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, and theatre/film consultant.

However, it's still hard to say if "Game of Thrones" might be the greatest show of all time. According to experts, we have seen series over the years that are superb in so many different ways that it becomes difficult to create a fair comparison.

"But 'GoT' is likely an important first chapter in a story about significant change in international distribution and a new stage of internationalization of the television industry," Lotz said.

Yet, in the future it could be considered a "classic" and be referenced for a very long time as one of the best examples of what is being referred to as "peak TV" in its rich.

"This is the kind of show that fans will enjoy watching again and new fans will keep discovering. With its very human stories about power, family, politics, and intrigue, "Game of Thrones" deals with universal themes that will stay relevant for many generations, much in the same way that classic literature survives because it always speaks to the human condition," Donovan concluded.

The best places to watch the *'Game of Thrones'* premiere this Sunday

PAT KING
patrick.king@metro.us

ALL PHOTOS HBO

The premiere of "Game of Thrones" is finally here! While people will be scrambling to find the perfect places to watch with their friends, we decided to find some of the best spots for you to witness the shocking surprises, the crushing-yet-satisfying blows, and the epic dragon-centric content that the show has been known to provide. Here are the best places to catch the "Game of Thrones" premiere around the city.

The Arlo Hotel
The Arlo Hotel in SoHo will be partnering with DoNYC for an epic "Game of Thrones" premiere party in their movie theater. The event will have everything you could ask for if you are looking for a cinematic experience with big buckets of popcorn, candy and even cocktails to help you transport yourself into the vast world of "GoT." There is no RSVP or ticket required to snag a spot in the theater, so why not give the show the screen it deserves rather than watching it on your tiny little flatscreen at home? Listen, I don't know you. I'm just trying to help.

The Arlo Hotel in SoHo, 231 Hudson St., 9 p.m., free

Velvet
Comedians Orli Matlow and Aliza Small will be hosting the "Burn Them All: A 'Game of Thrones' Roast and Watch Party" this Sunday night at Williamsburg's Velvet. Matlow and Small will be presiding over the event and bringing up a ton of their comedian friends to live-roast the show's characters before the premiere. On the dais will be Carrie Wittmer, Maggie Crane, Jon Bershad, Sopan Deb, Eddie Dougrou, Philip Markle, Rachel Pegram, Vivek Netrakanti, Jackson Kapinos and Ana McCasland.

The event is free of charge but the space is tiny, so make sure to conquer a table or barstool as if it was some neglected castle in a far-off land.

Velvet, 174 Broadway, Brooklyn, 6-8:30 p.m., free

Dekalb Market Hall
The Downtown Brooklyn shopping center City Point's new beer hall, Dekalb Market Hall, will be hosting a big "Game of Thrones" viewing party on its giant projector this Sunday night. The Hall will be serving a variety of differently themed cocktails including The Red Wedding (champagne, strawberries & citrus rum) and The Dragon Fire (spiced rum, coconut cream, pineapple & hibiscus tea). They will also have food on hand from Fletcher's BBQ including French Fries of Many Faces (waffle fries smothered with smoked "carnage" with a choice of chicken, brisket or pulled pork), Dothraki Deep Fried Wings (smoked by the "fire of

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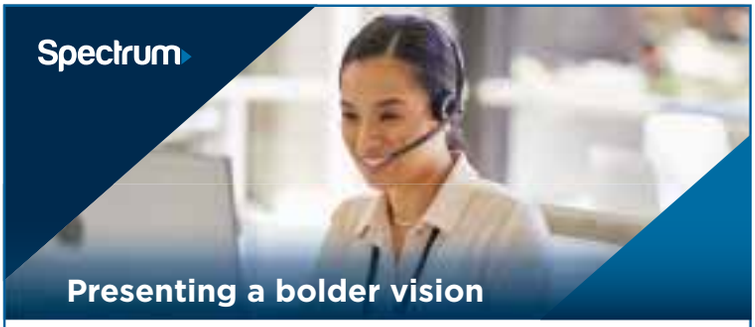

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the dragon," fried and tossed in buffalo or BBQ sauce), Tyrion's Surprisingly Large Hot Link (two spicy pork sausages on a long roll with mustard) and, of course, Fletcher's brisket burnt ends. Burned things are pretty on-"GoT"-brand, right?

The Hall will also be partnering with OKCupid, which is now using TV shows as a way to connect with people. If you can prove that you are an active user, you will get one free "Game of Thrones" cocktail. Who can argue with that?

Dekalb Market Hall. 445 Albee Sq. West (below City Point), 8:30-11 p.m., free

Parklife

This 4,000-square-foot Gowanus bar and food spot will be kicking off the premiere with this special occasion dubbed "The (Sunday) Night's Watch." If you haven't been to this place, conveniently connected to the comedy and event space Littlefield, this is the perfect place to bring your crew of friends to audibly gasp at the new developments in the s--tshow that is Westeros while eating some of the best Mexican food around from the people at Antojitos El Atoradero. The nacho fries with chorizo go perfectly with tequila and the dread and disappointment that only George R. R. Martin can cause.

There is no RSVP required for this event, but even though Parklife is a big-enough space, you might want to get there early to get your friends and you a table before the show starts.

Parklife. 636 Degraw St., Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m., free

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SPORTS

Nets face Sixers in 1st round

Brooklyn is back in the playoffs as underdogs against the 76ers.

JOE PANTORNO
joseph.pantorno@metro.us

D'Angelo Russell (left) and Caris LeVert (right). GETTY IMAGES

The Brooklyn Nets are back in the playoffs for the first time since 2015, gaining the No. 6 seed after putting the finishing touches on a 42-40 season.

Who saw this coming?

Sure, the playoffs were a goal, albeit more of a pipe dream, heading into the season for plenty of the Nets faithful, but a weak Eastern Conference coupled with the brilliant work of general manager Sean Marks head coach Kenny Atkinson, and the emergence of D'Angelo Russell has the Nets back from the brink of oblivion.

The franchise rooted to the bottom of the NBA standings for the last three years put up a winning record for the first time since the 2013-14 campaign with a group of players written off by other organizations.

Their reward for such a special season is a first-round postseason date with the Philadelphia 76ers, a team with Eastern Conference Final aspirations. The No. 3 seed is the overwhelming favorites this series after putting up a second-straight 50-plus-win season.

Philadelphia has what is considered by many to be the best starting five in the NBA with Ben Simmons, JJ Redick, Jimmy Butler, Tobias Harris, and Joel Embiid. It's a far more skilled group than what the Nets have fielded this season, yet the two teams managed to split their four-game season series, which provides a flicker of hope that Brooklyn could shock the NBA world.

Here is how the two teams stack up heading into their first-round series:

BROOKLYN NETS

STARTING 5

PG- D'ANGELO RUSSELL
SG- CARIS LEVERT
SF- JOE HARRIS
PF- JARED DUDLEY
C- JARETT ALLEN

2018-19 STATS

RECORD: 42-40
POINTS PER GAME: 112.3
REBOUNDS PER GAME: 46.6
FG%: 44.5
3PT%: 35.5
POINTS ALLOWED: 112.3

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS

STARTING 5

PG- BEN SIMMONS
SG- JJ REDICK
SF- JIMMY BUTLER
PF- TOBIAS HARRIS
C- JOEL EMBIID

2018-19 STATS

RECORD: 51-31
POINTS PER GAME: 115.2
REBOUNDS PER GAME: 47.8
FG%: 47.1
3PT%: 35.9
POINTS ALLOWED: 112.5

NETS vs. 76ERS PLAYOFF SCHEDULE

Game 1 at PHL- Saturday, Apr. 13, 2:30 PM ET (ESPN)
Game 2 at PHL- Monday, Apr. 15, 8 PM (TNT)
Game 3 at BRK- Thursday, Apr. 18, 8 PM (TNT)
Game 4 at BRK- Saturday, Apr. 20, 3 PM (TNT)
Game 5 at PHL- Tuesday, Apr. 23, TBD*
Game 6 at BRK- Thursday, Apr. 25, TBD*
Game 7 at PHL- Saturday, Apr. 27, TBD*

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Barzal showing poise beyond years in playoffs

It was a given that one of the Islanders' largest weaknesses heading into their Eastern Conference quarterfinal matchup with the Pittsburgh Penguins was experience.

In the last three years, most of the Penguins' roster has seen more postseason time than many of Islanders have put together in their entire careers.

The dynamic was no more evident than between the teams' two biggest playmakers.

Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby, a three-time Stanley Cup winner, took the Nassau Coliseum ice for Game 1 on Wednesday night with 160 postseason appearances under his belt.

Islanders second-year center Mathew Barzal — the reigning Calder Trophy winner who grew up idolizing Sidney Crosby as a boy in Coquitlam, British Columbia, calling him "a hockey wizard, a god almost" — was playing in his very first.

Mathew Barzal provided the game-winning assist in Game 1 against the Penguins. GETTY IMAGES

On Wednesday night, though, you couldn't tell the difference between the legendary veteran and the gifted youngster as the latter was one of New York's most valuable players in its 4-3 overtime victory in Game 1.

The 21-year-old helped provide some level-headedness to a game Game 1 that was in the throes of anarchy. Two Tom Kuhnhackl goals were disallowed and Josh Bailey, who eventually scored the game-winner, hit the post with seven seconds left in regulation after the Penguins tied it at three just moments earlier.

Leading a 2-on-1 rush in overtime, Barzal patiently waited and deked goaltender Matt Murray out of position before backhanding a chance off the post. The deflection came out to Bailey, setting up an easy tap-in of a game-winner.

"Barzy in particular, I thought he set the tone," Islanders head coach Barry Trotz said. "He was skating. He was dangerous . . . You wouldn't know that this was [his] first playoff game."

Penguins head coach Mike Sullivan sent Crosby's line out against Barzal's on multiple occasions to try and get Pittsburgh's offense going. Of New York's resolute, defensive lineup, Barzal's first line with Anders Lee and Jordan Eberle is the most susceptible.

However, the line kept Crosby's line stuck in Pittsburgh's defensive zone as they played one of their best offensive games in over a month.

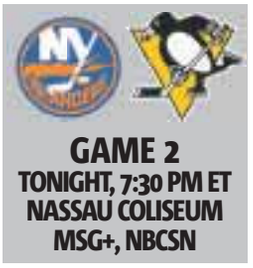
Crosby was held pointless with just two shots on goal while the trio of Barzal, Lee, and Eberle combined for four points.

"I think it's just the way evolved," Barzal said of his constant matchups with Crosby. "He's so dangerous, he's the best player in the world for a reason."

His efforts left the future Hall-of-Famer befuddled following Game 1 but determined to make adjustments ahead of Friday's Game 2 at the Coliseum.

"We just have to get out of our end. We can't score from 200 feet away," Crosby said. "We have to do a better job of getting it in their end and spending our energy in the offensive zone."

That's quite an impact made by a 21-year-old kid getting his first taste of postseason hockey. JOE PANTORNO



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COUNTY OF QUEENS
U.S. BANK, N.A. AS TRUSTEE FOR LSF9 MASTER PARTICIPATION TRUST, V. HATERAM SINGH, ET AL.

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to a Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated August 9, 2017, and entered in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Queens, wherein ONEWEST BANK, FSB, is the Plaintiff and HATERAM SINGH, ET AL. are the Defendants. I, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the QUEENS COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 88-11 SUTPHIN BLVD. COURTROOM #25, JAMAICA, NY 11435, on May 17, 2019 at 10:00 AM, premises known as 17343 103RD ROAD, JAMAICA, NY 11433: Block 10232, Lot 46
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COUNTY OF Queens,
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GAMES

metro.us/crossword

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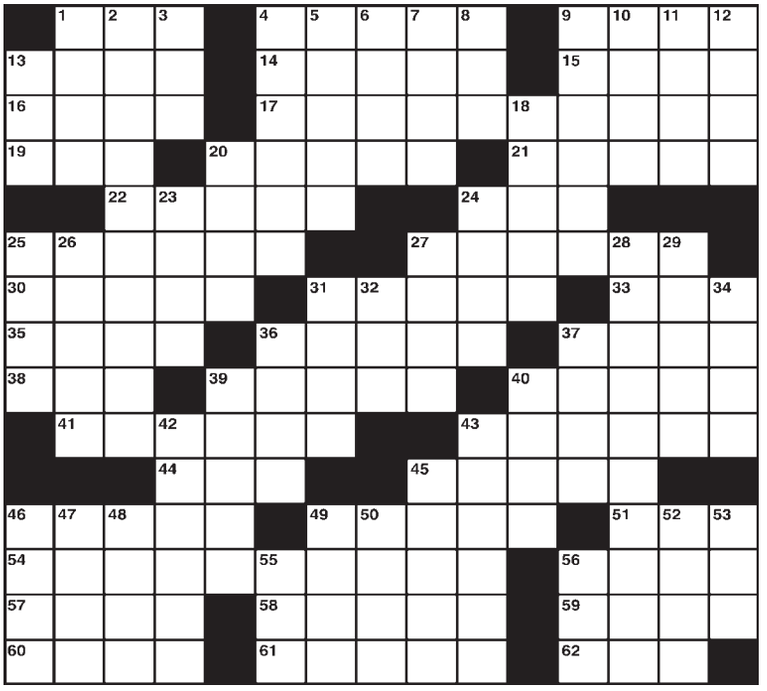
Check your answers at metro.us/games

ACROSS

1 __ down; make a note of
4 Syrup flavor
9 Failure
13 Asian desert
14 Reserved
15 __ up; form a row
16 Ready, willing and __
17 Disgust; aversion
19 Fraternity letter
20 Gave a job to
21 External
22 Magnificent
24 Took first place
25 Biblical book
27 Samples
30 "__ of Old Smokey"
31 Report card mark
33 Big kahuna, for short
35 Cool one's heels
36 Hollandaise, for one
37 __ at; taunt
38 Give it __; make an attempt
39 __ mignon
40 Game of chance
41 "You __, you lose"
43 Exhaled audibly
44 Deli purchase
45 Buoyant wood
46 Means of communication
49 Follow stealthily
51 Eggy drink
54 Spreadable sausage
56 "__ in the Life"; Beatles song
57 Go __; review
58 Shed crocodile tears
59 Bit of bacteria
60 Declare untrue
61 Famous; eminent
62 Sullivan & others

DOWN

1 Steve of Apple Inc.
2 Duty
3 Man's accessory
4 Singer Carey
5 On the ball
6 Leo XIII or Pius X
7 Deafening
8 File drawer, perhaps
9 Display pompously
10 Dryer residue
11 All at __; suddenly
12 Look through a keyhole
13 Opening
18 Lasso loop
20 Stack
23 Hilarious person
24 Get one's feet wet
25 Neighbor of Nebraska
26 Pantyhose dings
27 Diplomacy
28 Fair; impartial
29 Military attack
31 Storm wind
32 Regret
34 Nudge
36 Clothing label info
37 Irish dances
39 Entrance hall
40 Cheat out of
42 Cantankerous
43 Like canned peanuts, usually
45 Keep a cooking turkey moist
46 Trudge
47 Bee colony
48 Hotpoint appliance
49 Japanese wrestling form
50 Horse's canter
52 Rowers' items
53 School building
55 Actress Ming-Na __
56 Grow old



BY TCA

metro.us/wordsearch

M	R	R	R	P	D	N	Y	E	G
E	E	E	T	A	L	O	D	U	X
D	C	T	V	V	E	I	E	G	D
I	U	I	B	N	T	S	M	O	N
W	D	R	R	I	T	I	O	L	I
D	O	W	E	N	E	V	C	O	G
L	R	H	A	F	R	E	B	N	H
R	P	P	S	V	M	L	N	O	T
O	N	V	F	C	A	E	S	M	H
W	I	X	M	Q	N	T	U	Q	G

Comedy
David
Guest
Host
Late
Letterman
Monologue
NBC
Night
Pants
Producer
Show
Television
Worldwide
Writer

metro.us/wander

Category: Music Mixups

H	T	I	W	G
M	E	B	E	N
W	E	U	L	O
I	W	O	Y	K
L	L	R	O	C

Trace a path, using every letter once, to find the hidden phrase. Your path can turn in any direction, but not diagonally.

metro.us/sudoku

2	3	4						
9		6			7	8		1
					6	3		
			7		4			6
		9	5	1	8	4		
7			6		2			
		2	1					
1		7	2			6		3
						1	2	4

Yesterday's Answers

D	O	P	E		O	M	E	G	A		E	C	H	O	
O	A	R	S		N	O	B	E	L		S	H	O	W	
C	H	I	T		S	U	B	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	
S	U	N		P	E	T	S			H	A	C	K	S	
		C	L	O	T	H			R	O	Y				
S	H	E	E	T	S			W	A	R	S	A	W		
O	A	S	I	S		M	E	R	I	T		P	I	E	
F	U	S	S		L	O	W	E	D		S	P	R	Y	
A	T	E		W	I	D	E	N		S	P	R	E	E	
	E	S	C	A	P	E			S	T	E	E	D	S	
			A	D	S			B	L	O	W	N			
S	T	A	R	E			T	R	A	P		T	K	O	
L	I	B	E	R	A	T	I	O	N		K	I	N	D	
A	R	C	S		R	E	M	I	T		I	C	E	D	
B	E	S	S		K	E	E	L	S		M	E	W	S	

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